

STOCKPORT  
AND SOUTH  
MANCHESTER  
CAMRA

# OPENING TIMES



No:  
112

AUGUST 1993

STILL  
FREE

## GOING.. GOING... ?



The Rising Sun, Hazel Grove



The Grove, Clayton



The Sir Humphrey Chetham, Clayton



The Little Bradford, Bradford

**QUESTION: What do all these pubs have in common?**

**ANSWER: All these, and more, will be knocked down if the planners get their way.**

**INSIDE WE REVEAL THE GROWING THREAT TO OUR LOCAL PUBS!**

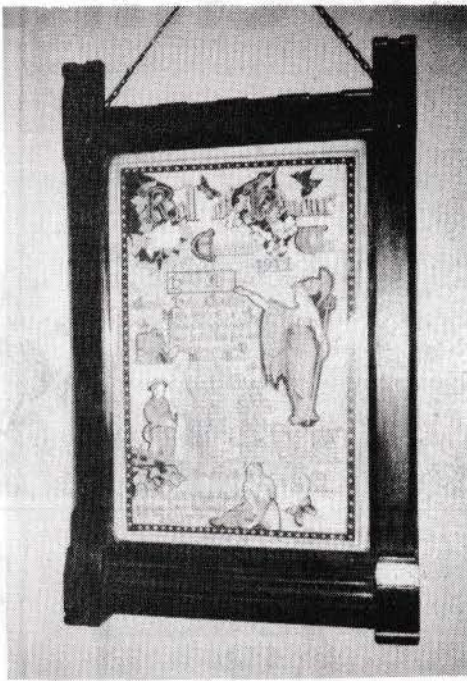
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# SAVE OUR PUBS

The fight to save our public house heritage seems never ending. Over the past months the pages of Opening Times have reported some of the threats to the pubs of Stockport & South Manchester - now in this special issue we bring you the full picture, and it isn't a pretty one. The threats are many and varied: road schemes, tram schemes, supermarket schemes, but the end result is inevitably the same - a constant erosion of a once valued British institution: the public house.



## METROLINK MAYHEM

The proposals to extend the Metrolink system to Ashton will mean the loss of four more pubs if the scheme goes ahead as planned. Having apparently forgotten the battles over the Coach & Horses and Castle & Falcon, the planners aim to take the new line through the Auld Land Syne and the Pollard, both on Pollard Street; and the Sir Humphrey Chetham and the Grove on Ashton New Road. The Pollard has been closed for years but the remaining three are popular and well used pubs whose tenants stand to lose their homes as well as their businesses.

As we went to press all three pubs were displaying posters and running petitions against the proposals. CAMRA has formally lodged its objections and this month we hope to make a high-profile presentation of the petitions to the transport authority.

## GOING FOR GOLD...

As the Olympic decision day approaches, the local media seem to be whipping themselves up into a frenzy. But beyond all the hullabaloo lies the stark reality of what the bid means for those living and working in the affected areas. The plight of the Little Bradford, scheduled to be replaced by landscaping, has been well documented here, and despite a virtual media blackout, the fight to save this pub goes on.

The latest scheme, for the Olympic Village, affects yet more pubs. Of the two most threatened, one, the White House on Great Ancoats Street, is a rare city centre freehouse; whilst the other, the Jolly Angler on Ducle Street, is a city institution, known by drinkers from far and wide. The Angler is scheduled to be replaced by, of all things, a tree-lined processional way! Such is the repute of this pub that local CAMRA member, and Halle Orchestra member, Dara de Cogan, organised a musical afternoon at the pub which attracted many Halle members and representatives of Hydes brewery. Despite the proposals, the planners insist the



Jolly Angler has been identified as a building to save, so perhaps common sense will prevail. But what becomes of the White House...?



# SAVE OUR PUBS

## SHOPPING FOLLY

The latest threat to emerge to local pubs comes not from the schemes to regenerate run-down parts of the inner-city but from retail schemes in the prosperous suburbs.

Here the spotlight switches to Hazel Grove. One important pub, the Red Lion, has already been lost, sold by owners Greenalls (who else?) for redevelopment. It wasn't long before the pub was a heap of rubble. Although nothing special as a pub, the building was an important link with the pre-Victorian era. Next in the firing line could be the Rising Sun. Further proposals are on the table to replace this pub with yet another supermarket. Closer to the Town Centre in Edgeley, the Pineapple is also closed and boarded up and once again the betting is that if it does re-open it will be as a shop. In itself the Pineapple would be no great loss to the town's pub scene but there are far more worthy pubs also located in shopping areas which could easily suffer the same fate - after all the Boddington PubCo were contemplating the restoration of the Buck & Dog until they got an offer they couldn't refuse from Barclays Bank...

## MOTORWAY MADNESS

Road schemes in general have long posed a threat to pubs and, as the Government announces plans to speed up its £23 Billion roads programme the axe seems set to fall ever further. In East Manchester alone, 11 pubs have fallen victim to road schemes in the recent past with the Hyde Road scheme set to take another four (or even five if the proposals to save the Plough are rejected...). On top of that the Intermediate Relief Road has seen off such classics as the Duke of Edinburgh on Mill Street and the Railway on Pottery Lane.

Stockport isn't immune either - the town last suffered a bout of motorway madness in the late seventies which saw off such pubs as the Club House, the Gardeners Arms and the Rock House. Lately however the council have been making noises about completing an inner relief route which is slated to go down Shaw Heath and King Street West and so putting long-term question marks over pubs along its route - the Blue Bell and the Comfortable Gill spring to mind as potential victims here.

## IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW...

It's not pleasant reading is it? For what seems an eternity Opening Times has been banging on about one pub or another under threat but never before have we brought them all together. It must be said that the full picture is horrifying and there seems to be no end in sight.

We in CAMRA and others will do what we can but at best all we can hope for are occasional successes while the bulk of the destruction continues unabated. What can be done? While people may be willing to campaign and protest when a threat is imminent, by then it is often too late. What is needed is a sea-change in the attitudes of those who draw up these plans, the presumption must be that local amenities, and that doesn't just include pubs, are retained unless there is absolutely no alternative. Coupled with this must be an early-warning system to alert conservationists and locals alike when any plans are mooted which could affect those amenities. To this end we in CAMRA are working with local authorities in drawing up their Unitary Development Plans to identify important pubs which should be saved from demolition or redevelopment.

Tied in with this we also need tougher building regulations to prevent rogue companies knocking down or otherwise despoiling important pubs which are not statutorily protected (who can I mean?). Pubs can also remain standing but still be irretrievably ruined by insensitive internal alterations. This is a theme we will be returning to next month when we present our annual Pub Vandalism Awards (and, given certain events earlier in the year, no guesses for who is in line for one of those!)

### EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING

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**PLEASE NOTE: COPY DATE FOR  
SEPTEMBER OPENING TIMES  
IS FRIDAY 19 AUGUST**





# PUB of the Month August

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

The Stockport & South Manchester Pub of the Month award for August goes to Little Jack Homers on Wellington Street, Stockport. Little Jack Homers has always been a fine little pub with three cosy rooms in an unusual split level layout and a reputation for good lunchtime food. Sadly, though, it was for many years let down by the beer range. Whilst perfectly well kept the one cask ale, Websters Yorkshire Bitter, latterly supplemented by Ruddles County, was hardly an irresistible attraction.

Luckily, this was one of the clutch of local pubs bought by Sunderland-based independent brewers Vaux, and the beer range is now as good as the pub - Vaux Samson, Double Maxim and Wards Bitter are the regulars and these are invariably supplemented by a guest, usually a premium ale along the lines of Batemans XXXB.

The award, though, is more than a tribute to the improved beer range, it is also made in acknowledgement of the work put in by landlady Yvonne O'Connor. Her late husband's sudden death left her with not only a pub to run but also a mountain of debt. The temptation to throw in the towel must have been enormous, but Yvonne is made of sterner stuff and through her determination and the invaluable help of new husband John, Little Jack Homers is now a welcome and successful part of the local pub scene.

This well won award will be presented to John and Yvonne on Thursday 26th August when a memorable night is promised.

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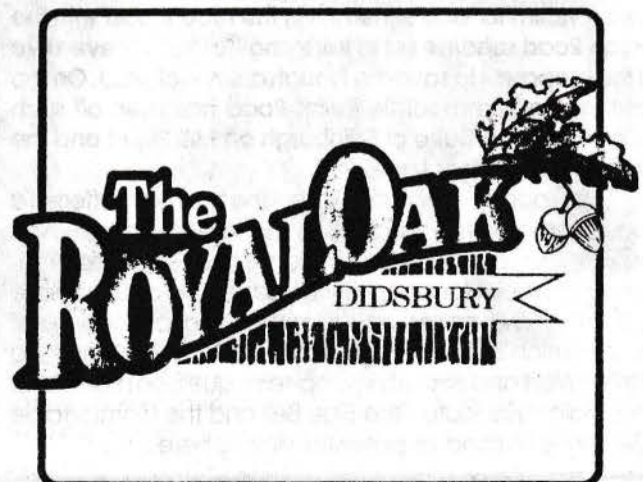
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# Pub In The Peak

by Peter Edwardson

One of the appealing features of the Peak District is that, despite its scenic delights and facilities for visitors, it remains the home and work-place of a substantial local population. It is still a real, functioning environment and not just a theme park set out for the benefit of tourists. A pub which exemplifies this dual character is the Old Bowling Green at Bradwell.

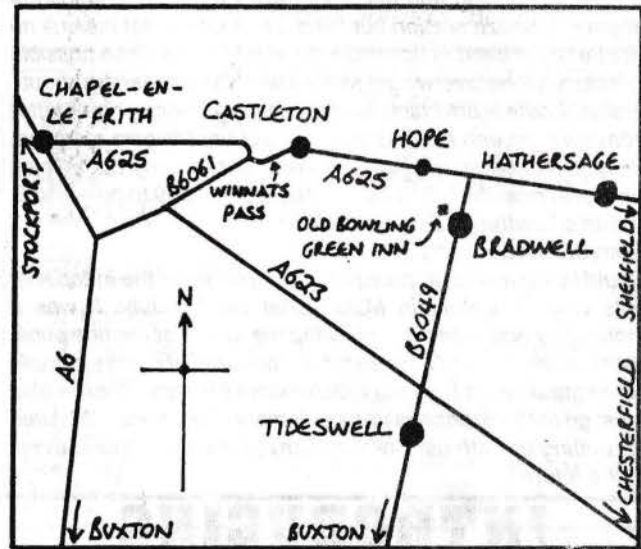
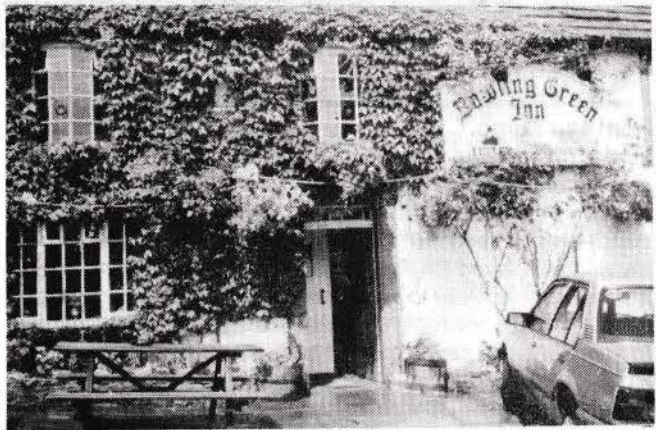
Bradwell is a large village straddling the B6049 which leads up from the Hope Valley to Tideswell. Considering how close it is to the frantic tourist trail along the A625 through Hathersage up to Castleton it is surprisingly quiet. At the north end of the village is a large, triangular green. At the top corner, a minor road leads up through what must be one of the narrowest blind corners this side of Cornwall into the area of the village known as Smalldale, along a route marked on the Ordnance Survey map as a Roman road. The Old Bowling Green stands a short distance further on, set back from the road on the right.

It's a long, low, white-painted building of considerable age, half-covered in ivy. There's a magnificent view over the Hope Valley to Win Hill and Bamford Edge from the car park and the garden at the back. The front door leads you straight through a short corridor into the main bar at the rear, which is the heart of the pub. There are three further rooms - a snug at the front on the left, a pool room to the right, and a lounge with another bar on a higher level at the top right corner. While the interior has obviously been altered and opened up over the years, it retains a traditional atmosphere with oak beams, wood panelling and real fires, and has a pleasantly lived in feel.

The beer range on a recent visit comprised handpumped Tetley Bitter, Stones Bitter and Worthington Bitter. Guest beers from independent breweries have also been spotted at times, but none was in evidence on this occasion. Not maybe the world's most enterprising selection of beers, but all are kept in very good condition and the Leeds-brewed Tetleys in particular is well worth sampling. The pub has made a number of appearances in CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide.

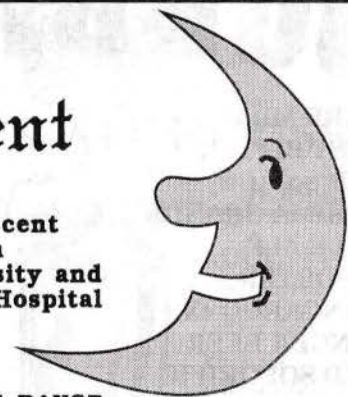
There's a comprehensive menu of bar food ranging from sandwiches and ploughman's through a variety of main courses up to steaks and the like, and including a number of interesting and unusual dishes. Prices are fairly reasonable, particularly in comparison with some of the tourist traps in the Hope Valley, with most main courses under £5. Food is available every lunchtime and evening.

The Old Bowling Green isn't an unspoilt gem like the Barley Mow at Kirk Ireton, the subject of last month's article, but it's a real pub with a good atmosphere which provides facilities for visitors while still retaining a strong local character, a difficult balancing act which is managed with some skill. Some of the photos on the walls hint at some lively going-on amongst the locals once the tourists are gone!



## The Crescent

on the Crescent  
between  
Salford University and  
Salford Royal Hospital

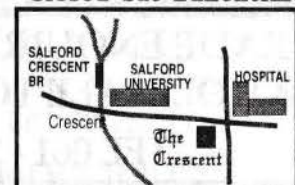


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# OPENING TIMES LETTERS

From Bert Kemp:

*In the complaints you have received regarding excessive noise at the Beer Festival please add my own - it was truly appalling - I had difficulty in staying long enough to 'sup' two pints. I was pleased that in Opening Times July others shared my views. I missed the Festival in the Masonic Hall last year so made a special effort to get to the Town Hall this year. You put so much hard work into the Festival it is a great disappointment to some of us to have it ruined by noise posing as music.*

From Richard Hough:

*I read Opening Times avidly each month and find many of the articles stimulating and full of interest. I particularly enjoy the Rhythm & Booze section but I find it frustrating that there is no picture of the band to accompany the text. Would it be possible to include a photo so we get an idea who we are reading about? (Editor's note - how nice to get such a complimentary letter from such an unbiased source! To answer his own question, Richard will be supplying a photo to accompany his articles wherever possible - there should be a pic of 999 to go with this month's Rhythm & Booze article)*

From Richard Hough (again!)

*Could I offer a vote of thanks to the organiser of the Independents Day Pub Hunt in Manchester on 3rd July. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day allowing me to visit some fine pubs, many of which I had not been in before, and of course sample some great beers from our independent brewers. Thanks also must go to the licensees and customers of the pubs we visited for putting up with us. Are there any plans for a similar event in the future?*

# West Coast News

The long-awaited move of West Coast Brewery has now taken place, and the beers of Manchester's favourite microbrewery are now being produced at the Justin Close site in Chorlton-on-Medlock. Hopefully this will see an early opening of the Brewery Tap though a licensee for the pub remains to be selected.

A new face can also be expected at the Kings Arms, whose well-known licensee Simon Finch has left to re-open the 'Miners Arms' in Sling in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire - the nearest pub to Freeminer Brewery, in which Don Burgess, who formerly brewed at West Coast is a partner. (The other pub in Sling, the upmarket Orepool with attached motel, also sells Freeminer beer - could this be a local monopoly?) These personnel changes also see Trevor Sprout leaving West Coast Brewery to take on the position of brewer at Allied Breweries' Flea & Firkin, where the presence of a permanent on-site brewer has been sadly missed.

A major new outlet for West Coast beers is Prestwich Church Institute and Men's Club, on Bury New Road in Prestwich - easily accessible by Metrolink. Beer prices are extremely keen - mild 88p, bitter 90p, and Kangaroo £1.04. West Coast beers have also reappeared at the Orwell in Wigan, and Ginger Beer is back at Robinski's Waleet in Fallowfield. At "home base" in the King's. Ginger has been switched to electric pump and is served via a flash cooler - even more refreshing, even more dangerous!

*(Editor's note - yes indeed! Next year's event promises to be an altogether bigger event with major involvement from the licensed trade and one of its charities. More in due course...)*

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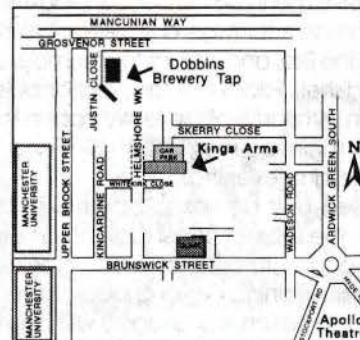
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# RHYTHM and BOOZE

By Richard Hough

The Witchwood in Ashton has for some time been one of the premier real ale outlets in Tameside, with up to nine quality beers available at any one time. In addition it is renowned locally as a live music venue with bands on almost every night. When I heard that punk stalwarts 999 were playing, it was a combination not to be missed. First up were Bob, Bob, Bob & Bob, four scousers who are loud, and weird. The day they stop delivering their hard-hitting songs with relevant lyrics is the day real music dies. They enjoyed it and so did the crowd. So to the bar... The beers tried on the night were Theakstons XB and, rare locally, handpumped Banks's Mild, both of which were very good. In addition the Witchwood Best rotating mystery guest is proving popular at £1 a pint.



The music room was full of people sporting assorted hairstyles, from raving baldies to cultured mohicans. These are not obnoxious hooligans, but punks hell-bent on having a good time, and that's what 999 gave them. They've been causing a stir for 17 years now and can still outgun most of the opposition. The set included a healthy mix of old classics like "Homicide" alongside material from the new album which is out in October, all delivered with power and energy unsurpassed anywhere. The crowd went barmy as the band pumped out the tunes, proving for sure that punk will never die. All too soon it was over. As for the bruises, who cares? In case of Emergency, dial 999. Awesome.

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21 AUGUST - DANDY LIONS

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# STAGGER

with Paul Felton

The pleasant evening of June 18 saw the latest in our succession of pub crawls, this time around the many delights of the area of Brinksway and the western parts of Edgeley.

We started at the **Gardeners Arms** on Northgate Road, basically one quite large, pleasant, carpeted room split into several areas. Although a GrandMet pub, the Gardeners usually has the considerable drawing card of Holts Bitter as a guest (albeit on electric pumps), but tonight this was sadly not the case, so we were forced to have the Websters Yorkshire Bitter. And while this might be considered to be a classic example of damning with faint praise, to our intense surprise this was actually pretty good.

The **Bulkeley Arms** is an average Boddingtons pub on the corner of Northgate Road and Brinksway, split into vault and lounge. Two beers were available, the standard Boddies bitter and, as a guest, Theakstons bitter (at £1.18). The sole person who tried the Boddingtons had very much the better of the deal: it was quite good, while opinions of the Theakstons varied from poor to average.

The **Woolpack** is a long-standing Good Beer Guide entry on Brinksway, in the perhaps unfortunate shadow of the blue pyramid. Major changes had taken place since your writer's last visit, and he remains not entirely convinced: the glorious isolation of the vault had been removed by putting a doorway in the wall in the entrance way (which unfortunately meant you walked straight into the flight path of the dart board) and blocking up the previous entrance to the vault at the back of the main corridor. But to the beer: rather than any of the regulars (Tetley and Theakstons bitters and Marstons Pedigree), we all tried one or other of the two guest beers, Moorhouses Black Cat mild and Knottingley Steam Packet Bargees bitter (a mouthful indeed): both were pretty good, with the latter the better.

The **Bridge** on Chestergate is a small Robinsons pub, no separate rooms but typically split into several areas, one including a pool table. A karaoke machine was situated behind us, thankfully not operational. Best mild was £1.12,

best bitter £1.20; most had the bitter, which was not too bad, while the mild was distinctly average.

Boddingtons **Comfortable Gill** on King Street West is a pub your writer has somehow managed never to visit before, but he found its name to be descriptive: it was indeed comfortable. Okay, the decor is fake Tudor, but the overall atmosphere was fine. Another pub basically of just one room split into areas, both Boddies mild and bitter were available, and both were pretty good, the bitter just shading it.

**Tom Thumbs** is just across the road, a comparatively modern pub and a recent convert to cask ale in the last couple of years. It's a two room affair, and the vault is pleasant enough. However, on this evening the lounge was extremely avoidable, as an unbelievably naff karaoke night was in session. Two bitters were available, John Smiths and the ubiquitous Boddingtons. While Boddies was okay, the John Smiths was decidedly off: but it's good to note that it was changed without any sort of complaint at all.

A free house on Chatham Street, the rather small **Olde Vic** has built up quite a reputation over the past few years, both in a positive manner for the range and consistent quality of its beers, and unfortunately in a negative manner for its astonishingly high prices. As ever, numerous beers were available: Freeminer Speculation was good, as was Hambleton bitter at £1.44 (!), while Everards Tiger was very good and the pick of the bunch. Butterknowle Black Diamond was off, and again changed without any problems (other than its remarkable price tag of £1.72 a pint for a 1050 gravity beer). Ah well, you pays your money...

The **Greyhound** on Bowden Street is a Boddingtons pub in the middle of the flats behind the Olde Vic. Its fine, friendly interior, vault and lounge, belies the rather functional exterior. It also does a good line in guest beers, for tonight we were offered two Eldridge Pope beers, Royal Oak and Blackdown Porter, and the porter was particularly wonderful. The regular beers are Boddies mild and bitter. Well worth a visit.

The **Church** is just opposite. It's a small, bustling Robinsons pub, again one which has long since lost its separate rooms, though again with separate areas (including a pool table). As seemingly ever in Robinsons pubs, best mild and best bitter were available, and both were okay.

The **Bluebell** is on Shaw Heath opposite the Station approach, an imposing GrandMet pub with several rooms. Beers available are Websters Yorkshire Bitter and Stones bitter. However, the pub was noisy and busy, and the service lacking to say the least, so much so that several of us left without being served.

Our final port of call was Robinsons excellent **Armoury** on Shaw Heath, a personal favourite. A comfortable lounge, bedecked with brass, a back darts room and a particularly fine vault all go to make up a cracking pub. Best mild and best bitter were on sale and both were good.

So concluded a Stagger with perhaps a wider array of both styles of pub and beers available than is often the case. The comments in this article can of course only reflect what we found on one particular night and should not be taken as an all-time judgement of the pubs or their beers. All of the pubs are quite easily accessed from the centre of Stockport so why not try them yourselves to see how much you (dis)agree.

## Apology from The Editor

Due to pressure of space and our main feature, an unusually large number of articles have been had to be held over till next month.

**Ye Olde Vic** Chatham St.  
Edgeley

**STOCKPORT'S PREMIER  
FREEHOUSE  
Guest Beers Weekly**

WE'RE  
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1993  
GOOD BEER  
GUIDE

TAYLORS

BATEMANS





# Cumberland Porkies

by Paul Jordan

Readers fortunate - or otherwise - enough to find themselves in the South Furness area of Cumbria this summer will - even the unobservant amongst them - note a fair proliferation of "Hartleys" pubs on their travels.

If they are luckier and have a copy of "The Furness Peninsula 1993 Visitors Guide" they will see on page 7 that they are advised, encouraged even, that "when in the area make sure you visit a Hartleys Pub and try the drink that made Ulverston famous."

Well, Stopfordians following this professional advice could well find themselves soaked - not by the regular local rainfall but by a heavy shower of alcoholic *deja-vu*.

Yes folks, the drink that "made Ulverston famous" is in fact brewed in that revered Furness institution - the Unicorn Brewery, Hillgate.

Hartleys Ulverston Brewery, established 1755, taken over by Robinsons in 1982 and closed by them in 1991 was latterly famous - well best known anyway - for its premium bitter "XB" developed in 1948 by long serving head brewer and eventual manager Eric Simpson.

Since closure was effected a version of this beer has been brewed in Stockport and supplied by Robinsons to the former Hartleys estate.

A pleasant beer, yes, but with its over-riding Robinson characteristics the "Drink that made Ulverston famous" it just ain't.

A complaint to the chief of Tourism, Furness Peninsula at his office in - would you believe - The "Old Brewery", Ulverston! Simply brought the dismissive reply that "There are no inaccuracies in the Furness Peninsula Guide."

So, if you're up there this summer, try a pint, you may well like it, but remember, just because **you** know it ain't really "The Drink that made Ulverston famous" don't tell everyone.

The Chief of Tourism won't like it. The folk selling it might not like it. And if you don't like it - or such deception?

Well, you could always head due north, call in at the first Jennings pub you hit and relax in the knowledge that you really will be enjoying genuine Cumbrian beer brewed at Cockermouth.

What's that! Jennings Oatmeal Stout? Oh no! this tale could run and run.

(Editor's note: Jennings Oatmeal Stout is contract brewed in Scotland(!) but that's another story...)



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# 5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JULY '88

The whole of the front page was given over to some very critical comments on low alcohol beers and lagers - this followed a CAMRA report revealing that in general, low alcohol beers offered a very poor deal.

**PRICE.** Much less duty is paid, but the low alcohol beers are even more expensive than normal strength brews. The average pub price of low alcohol lagers was £1.22 a pint, compared with 98p for those of normal strength.

**HEALTH.** A heavy drinker's health could benefit by a change to low alcohol products, but most of the beers contain a lot of sugar, and are not particularly low in calories. They also contain a variety of E-number additives, which may be potentially dangerous.

**TASTE.** Although most of the beers look alright, the taste is almost invariably a let-down. The best of the bunch was Claesthaler (also sold under Sainsbury's own label) - it is brewed in Germany, subject to their strict purity laws.

**CHOICE.** Of 22 brands available, 17 are lagers. The only widely available ale is Whitbread's White Label, which doesn't taste too bad.

The conclusion must be that these low alcohol products are the latest aspect of the Great Lager law - high on image and price, but low on character, quality and value.

The price of beer was in the news again, following CAMRA's National Prices Survey. Holts is still the cheapest, and Robinsons Best Bitter did quite well, being the third cheapest of its kind (it was beaten by 2 small breweries in Wales and the Midlands). The really big brewers (as ever) came off worst, so the message is clear - support your local independent brewers, it'll cost you less.

There was an item giving news of two small breweries - Titanic's closure had recently been reported, but brewing had re-commenced early in July, after the plant had been bought by the assistant brewer. The news of the Fox & Hounds at Stoddesden, Kidderminster was not so good - it was to go up for auction in August. Coincidentally, the New Breweries article reported that in 1979, Landlord Malcolm Downing had started brewing at the Fox & Hounds with Dasher Downings Draught. A stronger beer to follow later was to be called Dashers Disaster.

Readers would have noticed recent references to the Golden Lion in Stockport, with its 6 licensees in 2 years. So to end on a more stable note, it was reported that Jack & Beryl were leaving the Arden Arms after over 25 years there.

# CURMUDGEON



One of the most cynical and irresponsible marketing exercises carried out by the big drinks companies in recent times has been the introduction of super-strength ciders such as Diamond White, Max, "K" etc. Some of these have an alcoholic strength of over 8%, yet they are unashamedly aimed at young people, particularly young women. Apparently they are often referred to as "legover juice" (though I cannot vouch for this from personal experience). They certainly bear only a very tenuous connection to genuine, traditional cider, and are deliberately light-bodied so that they don't drink their strength.

So what, you may say, there are beers available which are just as strong, not to mention traditional ciders. But ordering an Old Tom or a Westons Special Vintage is not something to be undertaken lightly. There is certainly a place for strong beers and ciders, but it is essential that they should be taken seriously, and promoted for their heritage and character, not just their strength.

These ciders are regarded as being just something for a good time, and people often do not appreciate quite how strong they are. I have seen a young woman insist she was fit to drive after consuming four bottles - "it's only four little bottles after all, only two pints" - when this would probably have put her at least double the legal limit.

If the drinks trade wants the public to believe it has a sense of social responsibility, it needs to look very carefully at what it is doing marketing products such as these in the way it does.

Have you noticed the strange case of the disappearing beer mats? This seems to have started in London, but has rapidly spread north, particularly in managed houses belonging to the big brewers. For example, on recent visits, both the Woodstock in Didsbury and the Old Mill in Cheadle Hulme were completely devoid of mats. The reason can't be economy, as mats are produced by the truckload for every drink and tobacco promotion imaginable. Is it some kind of misguided, unfathomable attempt to make pubs look trendy?

The present tendency to serve beer in brim measure glasses with a tight creamy head overflowing the top means that pub tables quickly become awash with spilt beer, which either drips off the edge onto your clothes or splatters them when you lift your glass up to your mouth. Are beer-stained clothes trendy? A request for mats at the bar usually brings a sneering response of "Oh, we don't have beer mats here!" so the only answer is to carry a supply round with you just in case. Unfortunately, it's usually the sight of beer dripping onto my trousers which reminds me.

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# Oddbins' Odd Bottles

Until recently, the choice available for those wishing to drink bottle-conditioned beer at home was limited to bottled Guinness (sadly no longer with us), Worthington White Shield and a number of very strong specialities, mostly Belgian. All excellent beers, but in general ones to be savoured rather than consumed in quantity. There was a marked lack of beers at moderate, drinkable strengths.

Upmarket off-licence chain Oddbins have now made an enterprising move to fill this gap by introducing a range of bottle-conditioned beers in their shops, three "own labels" and two established brands from independent brewers.

The "own labels", all in 500 ml bottles (about nine tenths of a pint) are sold under the trademark of the Hanseatic Brewing Company but are in fact produced by well-respected independent brewers McMullens in Hertfordshire. They include the well-rounded, mid-brown BCA (4.5% ABV; £1.39), the lighter and hoppier IPA (4.5% ABV; £1.49) and the rich, roasty Black Russian Stout (4.8% ABV; £1.69). All are distinctive, tasty beers - try them all and see which you prefer.

The established brands, both in 550 ml bottles (about a pint) are Eldridge Pope Thomas Hardy Country Bitter (4.2% ABV; £1.29) and King & Barnes Festive (5.3% ABV; £1.39). While these too are high quality beers, they both have a typically Southern English fruity, malty character which may not be to the taste of many drinkers in this area.

These beers are not cheap, but they represent about the only opportunity to drink bottle-conditioned, "real" bitters and stouts at home in pints or near pints, and are all well

worth sampling. They have a distinctive, gentle, natural carbonation which sets them apart both from conventional fizzy canned beers and the new so-called "draught" canned beers which to my mind simply taste flat.

Oddbins also have a limited but interesting range of brewery-conditioned bottled beers from independent breweries, including some from the new micro-breweries such as Nethergate Bitter and Old Growler from Suffolk and Black Sheep Ale from North Yorkshire.

## Jennings Go From Strength to Strength

Last month we reported on the scandal of some of the national brewers watering down their beers to save themselves money. At the time we stressed that none of our local independents were planning to go down that routes - we can now report that one has in fact done the reverse!

Cumbrian brewers Jennings, whose beers are widely available in the local free trade are increasing the strength of their draught ales but not charging a penny more.

Jennings Bitter goes up from 3.4 to 3.5% alcohol and Cumberland Ale goes up from 3.8 to 4.0%. Managing Director Trevor Green explained that "in these difficult times it was appropriate to do something for our customers." The move involved considerable expenditure on changes to point of sale material but customer reaction has been very favourable. While there will be no price increase to take account of the increased strength of the beers, the company's annual price review does fall this month but the company stress that this will not include any element to take account of the new duty on the stronger beers.



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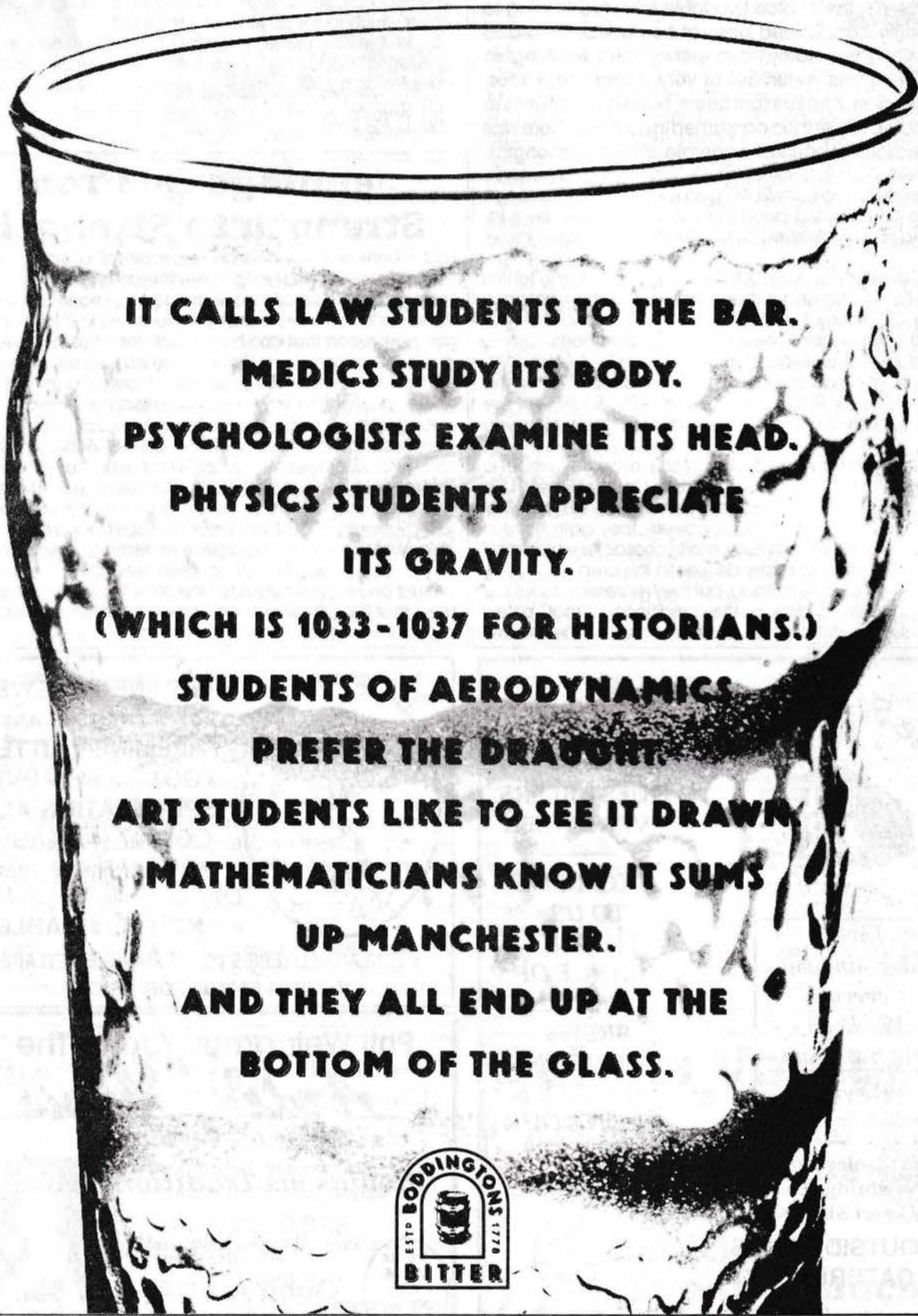
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**The Oddfellows, Mellor, by Rod Oliver**

For those readers old enough to remember, it was once possible to drive through Marple Bridge to Mellor. Rumour has it that October will see the old turnpike road re-opened. Shortly after you pass the Devonshire there is a delicious dip in the road and on the left is the most attractive exterior to a pub in the Stockport area. Three stone storeys and cunningly lit, the Oddfellows is festooned with climbing plants.

It is scarcely less attractive inside. Purists will point out that interior alterations have been made but first-time visitors will notice only the low ceilings, flagged floor and sensible use of space. I am the world's worst at distinguishing real wooden beams from ersatz but I must admit I have my doubts about some.

For years the beer was Greenall Whiteleys (and keg to boot) and savants rarely called, but now there is Draught Bass and Director's on handpump and very good both of them are. Like most old pubs it has its mysteries - among them how to park your car on the heptangular car park. Some time ago I was reading Byron from the thoughtfully provided bookshelf when the temporary landlord steered me into a conversation which culminated in his telling me of his two encounters with the noble lord (ghost). His wife overheard and warned him not to talk of the 'presences' he had felt upstairs in the pub. What a pity. In 1938 Groves & Whitnall were altering the place and found a bricked up doorway leading into the hillside at the back. No-one had the gump-tion to explore. And yes, they do have a licence to serve spirits.

Like most pubs of its type, the Oddfellows makes much of its living from food. I've never eaten there but the mammoth muffins would satisfy Billy Bunter. Don't fret about the road, get your hiking boots on and walk there!

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# Out & About in Tameside

Recent meetings of the High Peak branch have proved handy for 'mini pub crawls' before the meeting, although each could make for an interesting night out on its own.

A recent meeting at the **Station** in Ashton was rewarded by covering seven other pubs in the area ("mini-crawls" - ed.). Disembarking at Guide Bridge station we made the **Boundary** the first port of call. This is just across the road from the station and the choice was more limited than usual with only John Smiths, Wilsons and Websters Bitters available. Holts is usually the best bet.

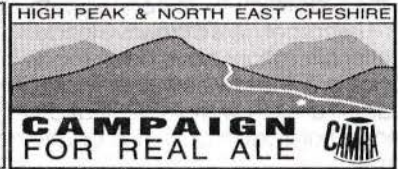
Walking towards Ashton, we sampled halves of Toby Light at the **Oxford**. This was reasonable enough and we noted that Worthington Bitter is also available. Just off the main road, the **Cambridge** has Thwaites best Mild and Bitter. The mild was in good shape. **Williams** is a "Whitbread Free House" but on our visit, the beers on offer included just one from the Whitbread stable - Boddingtons Bitter. This was accompanied by Batemans Mild and Cains Bitter, the latter being on the warm side. A selection of pumpclips behind the bar suggested some interesting beers had passed through.

At the **King William IV**, only Theakstons XB was sold and across at the **Red Lion** we stuck to the same brew, though here there was a choice of three including Boddingtons Bitter. The **Witchwood**, a Good Beer Guide stalwart in recent years, had a choice of many - we sampled the Adnams Bitter - and then it was off to the **Station** where Coach House Ostlers SPA, Oak Midsummer Madness and Hull Mild kept us happy for the rest of the evening.

The previous week we had travelled to Hyde's Newton station. At the nearby **Beehive** the Tetley Bitter was OK and, moving on under the motorway, the **Sportsman** on Hyde

Road had only Boddingtons which was quite poor. Moving into central Hyde, the **Queens** with a selection of six beers, and all in good shape - those available included Bass Special, Stones, Worthington Bitter, Draught Bass, Toby Light and Chesters Mild. At the nearby **Jolly Carter**, another Bass house, Worthington Bitter was joined by Youngs Special as a guest beer. The **Albion** had only Websters and Wilsons Bitters. Walking down Kingston Brow, the **Wellington** had Boddingtons at only £1 a pint while the **White Gates** had good Sam Smiths. Our destination was the **Cheshire Ring** with a reasonable selection, the choice being Thwaites Bitter.

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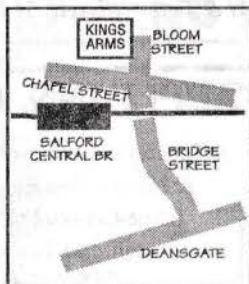


In Glossop, the **Wheatshaf** has recently dabbled with a guest beer, namely **Coach House Post Horn**. However, the customers apparently missed the dreary old **Websters** so much that it is unlikely to be a permanent feature. Down the road the **Commercial** has been more successful with **Cains Bitter**, **Greene King Abbot** and **Taylor's Landlord** among recent guests sold in tip-top condition. In central Glossop, **Cains** has also made an impression at the **Howard Arms** where it was very well received.

In Tameside, the **Station** in Ashton seems to be setting the pace for in-house beer festivals - well, out-of-house would be more correct as they tend to be in a marquee pitched next to the pub. The last was such a success that a repeat event is scheduled for 11th-14th November when something like 40 winterwarmers and porters will be available. Sounds like a 'must' and we will bring you more details nearer the time.

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# CAMRA CALLING!

Stockport & South Manchester Branch Diary

This issue of Opening Times won't be hitting the streets until about 10th August, so the first event to record this month will be the monthly meeting to be held on Thursday 12th at the Blossoms, Stockport Road (A6) Heaviley. The meeting will start at 8.00pm.

The following week sees the start of a hectic round of events starting on Monday 16th with a two-way social in Manchester City Centre starting at 9.00pm at the White House on Great Ancoats Street and moving on to the Jolly Angler at 10.00. On Wednesday 18th there is a trip to Mitchells Brewery in Lancaster. We will be leaving Stockport at 5.30 and places are limited. Phone Dawn on 445 0872 to book a seat. A hectic week rounds off Friday 20th with a Stagger this time along Hyde Road starting at the Star at 7.00pm and meeting at the Travellers Call at 8.30.

On Monday 23rd the social will be at the Bridge Inn on Georges Road, Stockport (opposite B&Q). Again this starts at 9.00pm. The same week sees the presentation of our Pub of the Month award to Little Jack Horners in Stockport (see article on page 4).

Finally, for the Stockport & South Manchester diary, a couple of events in early September - on Friday 3rd we will be holding a 10 pin bowling night in Stockport (with refreshments afterwards!) Phone Dawn for details of this one. On Monday 6th the social will be at the Milestone on Burnage Lane, again starting at 9.00pm.

If you live in the Marple, Romiley, Woodley and Bredbury areas then you are covered by the High Peak and North East Cheshire branch of CAMRA and they have notified us of the following events - on Monday 16th August they will be holding their monthly meeting at the White Horse in Whaley Bridge and on Monday 13th September the meeting will be at the Crown in Glossop. Aim to get there by 8.30. On the social side the branch are having a trip to the Wortley Brewery on Saturday 14th August. For details of High Peak activities contact Ralph Warrington on 236 2131 (w) or 68 3624 (h). Members of the two branches are of course more than welcome to attend each other's events.

# MANCHESTER MATTERS

by Rhys Jones

I'm delighted to report that, even before this month's issue had hit the bars, the Harp & Shamrock in the City Centre had re-opened. Marstons Bitter and Pedigree are on handpump - and maybe it's just sentiment, but the bitter did seem to taste that little bit better than in a good few places. Still in the Centre, the Royal Crown has now become Walker's Hotel and Bar, which intends to sell two handpumped beers at any one time; these are supplied by Marstons but not necessarily brewed by them - I had a good pint of Taylor's Landlord there recently. And, at the Old Grapes, Cairns Bitter is now on handpump alongside Boddingtons Bitter and a guest.

Levenshulme has seen two perhaps unexpected real ale gains. The Pack Horse on Stockport Road has handpumped Holts Bitter at £1 a pint, while nearly opposite the Railway has Chesters Bitter and Castle Eden Ale on handpump. The Chesters I has was the first I'd tasted since the move to contract brewing by Everards of Leicester, and was a very good pint - quite unrecognisable from the Sheffield or Salford offerings!

Finally, the Silver Birch in Wythenshawe, recently mentioned as a real ale gain, sadly blots its copybook by being one of the dwindling band of pubs to sell keg Scrumpy Jack cider on fake handpump.

## ...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...

Fritsby's on Wilmslow Road in Fallowfield has re-opened as Route 236, with Tetley Bitter, Walkers Best Bitter and Jennings Bitter on handpump - at a massive £1.60! At this price you're surely entitled to know what you're drinking - but my pint of "Jennings", while in perfectly good condition, was without doubt Tetley Bitter.

The City Road Inn, at the junction of Whitworth Street West and Albion Street in the Centre, has re-opened with Whitbread Trophy and Chesters Bitter on handpump, while the range at the Castlefield Hotel now varies, with at least one handpumped beer at a time.

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those wishing to join CAMRA who live in the Marple, Bredbury, Woodley or Romiley areas, should write instead to: Tom Lord, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple, SK6 6JH





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 b News... B R A N C H s....Pub  
 News... ..Pub N

More news on real ale in clubs - this time it's three cheers for West Gorton Working Men's Club, on Gorton Villa Walk off Clowes Street. Handpumps dispense Boddingtons Bitter, Chesters Mild and Tetley Bitter at prices well under £1.

A change in the beer range at Tom Thumbs on King Street West, Stockport. Out goes Websters Green Label and in comes Wilsons Bitter on handpump.

An Irish bar called O'Hare's flourished briefly recently in a basement at the corner of Newton Street and Back Piccadilly in Manchester City Centre. Though a friendly enough place, it sold no real ale. Things look set to change, though, when it reopens as an entertainment venue with a 2.00am licence Monday to Saturday nights, known as the Roadhouse. John Macbeath of the Castle on Oldham Street is involved with the venture - which is as good as a guarantee of good beer and good entertainment.

Gerry and Una Dolan, long-serving licensees of the Union in Ardwick (Pub of the Month, January 1993), are now enjoying a well-earned retirement. The Union's licensee, however, is still Gerry Dolan - for the pub has passed to their son. In times of instability in the pub trade, this should mean that the Union retains its distinctive character and excellent beer for many years to come.

The Bass Guest Beer scheme seems to have been a success and is continuing for the foreseeable future. The only Bass house in the Stockport & South Manchester area taking part is Bramhalls in, you guessed, Bramhall. Guest beers for September see Bass being a little more adventurous and taking from outside their own range. The next few weeks will see the likes of Eldridge Pope's Hardy Country Bitter, Morlands Old Speckled Hen, McMullens AK and Palmers IPA on sale.

The Plough, Heaton Moor Road closed for a 10 day refurbishment in the middle of July. There have been no changes of structure, or to the pub's essential character, only tasteful redecoration, re-upholstering and carpeting. There is a mosaic tiled area around the bar, and the immediate entrance area has been spruced up. All in all, a job well done. There are changes in the beer available. Tetley Bitter (Warrington) and Robinsons Best Bitter have remained without price increase. New to the Plough are the ubiquitous Marston's Pedigree and of much more interest Tetley's Imperial Premium Ale, a new 4.3% brew from Leeds selling at £1.43. The only drawback is the loss of Jennings, which was my favourite brew in the Plough. Food is available seven lunchtimes a week and prices are attractive.

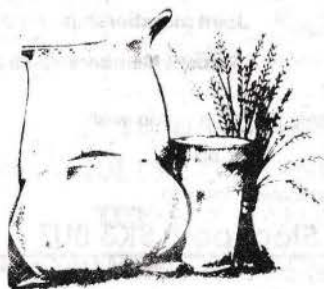
On the subject of Carlsberg-Tetley's new cask-conditioned version of their premium ale, Imperial, it is brewed at the Joshua Tetley brewery in Leeds & has usually only been found in keg form, restricted to the North-East. Despite its Yorkshire origins, the has all the hallmarks of a N.E. brew - decidedly malty and full-bodied. A previous attempt to sell the beer in cask form some years ago flopped. It deserves to succeed and was on excellent form when sampled at the Old Mill in Cheadle, one of its local outlets. Full marks also to the Old Mill for introducing real mild - not the type of beer you'd expect in this pub and a welcome initiative.

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